

Chapter 1

The Problem: Stereotypes

On December 1, 1927, the Grand Council Fire of American Indians made the following presentation to William Hale Thompson, the mayor of Chicago.

We, therefore, ask you while you are teaching school children about America, first, teach them the truth about the First Americans. . . . History books teach about Indians as murderers—is it murder to fight in self-defense? . . . White men called Indians thieves—and yet we lived in frail skin lodges and needed no locks or iron bars. White men call Indians savages. What is civilization? Its marks are a noble religion and philosophy, original arts, stirring music, rich story and legend. We had these. Then we were not savages, but a civilized race . . . The Indian has long been hurt by these unfair books. We ask only that our story be told in fairness.¹

That was 1927. Have educational materials improved since then? Are the perspectives of culturally rich and diverse American Indian peoples included in textbooks? Do textbooks present American Indians as people, as human beings, with the characteristics of all human beings? Are American Indians included in the history of the nation? The analysis presented in this chapter will cite numerous studies that show that textbooks consistently present standard stereotypes, omissions, and distortions about American Indians

rather than multiple perspectives. American Indian perspectives are not evident in textbooks.

This chapter begins with an analysis of the way in which textbooks present American Indians, and chapter 4 provides a culture-based perspective or framework. To begin this analysis we must look at the stereotypes about American Indians in textbooks. Why are these stereotypes so pervasive? What theories support the stereotypes? Why haven't textbooks changed? Why hasn't curriculum that values cultural diversity been developed to replace stereotypes in textbooks? This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section defines stereotypes about American Indians and discusses stereotypes in the media and textbooks. The second section examines stereotypes about the Iroquois in textbooks. The third section includes statements from Cornell undergraduates in the fall of 1991 showing the pervasiveness of the stereotypes to the present day.

Gordon Allport (1958) provided a definition of stereotypes and textbooks in his classic *The Nature of Prejudice*:

Whether favorable or unfavorable, a stereotype is an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category.²

Allport's conclusion from a 1949 study by the American Council on Education states:

Textbooks used in schools have come in for close scrutiny and criticism. An unusually thorough analysis reports that the treatment given minority groups in over three hundred textbooks reveals that many of them perpetuate negative stereotypes. The fault seems to lie not in any malicious intent, but in the culture-bound traditions which the authors of textbooks unwittingly adopted.³

A 1977 study by the Council on Interracial Books for Children, *Stereotypes, Distortions and Omissions in U.S. History Textbooks*, defined stereotypes as "An untruth or oversimplification about the traits and behaviors common to an entire people." Distortions refers to writers who "twist the meaning of history by slanting their presentation of facts . . . and by the omission of information that would alter the viewpoint being presented."⁴ Stereotyping occurs "when an entire group is characterized in specific ways and these characteristics are attributed to all individuals who belong to that group."⁵

With these definitions in mind, the next section presents five basic academic stereotypes about American Indians: the Noble Red Man or Noble Savage, the Savage, the Vanishing Race, Living Fossils, and the media image of Generic Indians. Each stereotype will be discussed to provide a definition and indicate the pervasiveness of the stereotype. Studies from 1968–1991 show the pervasiveness of stereotypes across educational materials from K–12 to college level and across subject matters in literature, history, and social studies.

The Noble Savage image is the romantic view of Indians as living close to nature, usually naked, in a simplistic romantic harmony with nature. This stereotype developed in the early days of European invasion and “captured the imaginations of men like Montaigne, Erasmus and Rousseau.”⁶ In literature, Longfellow’s *Hiawatha* was a combination of the Iroquois “Aywentha,” who was one of the founders of the Great Law of Peace, and Ojibwa mythology which he used to create the truly romantic view of American Indians. The romantic image formed the foundation of early views of American Indians, especially in Europe. From the beginning, American Indians were lumped into this generic group and defined as if they were one people. Therefore, the Western Hemisphere was never portrayed to reflect that it was populated by many diverse nations of Native peoples.

Another form of this stereotype is the Indian maiden who proves she was “eager to be of service to the superior white man.”⁷ The story of Pocahontas illustrates this view and provides the subtle, but pervasive, view that Indians can only better themselves by aligning with or becoming like the European settlers. Harris summarizes the use of these stereotypes in schools:

Hesitant to change a precedent the early settlers set, the school system combines the best of all choices and mentions a few Indians in history. It praises those Indians who helped white people grab the land or kill other Indians, depicts the rest as blood-thirsty savages who were impediments to progress, and presents the race in general as freaks, now extinct, whose struggle against the oppressors is depicted as a manifestation of the age old struggle of good and evil—the Indians evil, of course.⁸

The savage stereotype depicts American Indians as being inherently, genetically warlike. These are the war-whooping, raiding, scalping savages who attacked the defenseless pioneers. This stereotype does not acknowledge that American Indians had a right to

defend their homes and land against invasion by foreigners, as does any nation under attack by foreigners.⁹ The people who moved westward across this country did not view the American Indian in a romantic light. To these people, the Indian was a “heathen savage.”

The Puritans with their Christian imperialism contended that God meant the civilized Englishman to win the land from the “heathen” Indian. They theorized that the Indians were descendants of Adam through the Asiatic Tartars who had come to America by a land bridge from northern Asia. Because he had wandered so far, the Indian was far from God and had lost his civilization and law. He was in the power of Satan. The white man came, thus, to the conclusion that the Indian’s life as hunter and wanderer was what made him a savage.¹⁰

The savage stereotype portrayed Indians scalping non-Indians, (a practice that was introduced to New England Indians by the Puritans in 1637), as thieves, and drunkards. This view of Indians as killers was used to “justify the slaughter,” the genocide, of American Indians.¹¹

In the savage stereotype, American Indians are presented as an obstacle to “progress,” that is, the inevitable settlement of this land by Europeans, and as being quite incapable of becoming civilized. The theme of the “brave colonists surrounded by dangerous savages” is prevalent in textbooks.¹²

Virgil Vogel’s study of 100 history books defined the theme of disembodiment, which portrayed the American Indians as subhuman, nomadic, an obstacle to civilization, as wild animals or savage men. The theme of Indians as primitive hunters who did not “develop the land” led to the theory that the land was unoccupied, except for roaming hunters. Vogel defines defamation as the focus on so-called inferiority traits such as being, lazy, filthy, and capable of extreme cruelty.¹³ The savage image is the most enduring stereotype of American Indians. It pervades literature, history, social studies, media, cartoons, even children’s toys and contemporary movies.

During the late 1800s the general policy was to either eliminate or assimilate American Indians. Once again, the romantic notion emerged as the view of American Indians as a vanishing race became popular. This stereotype flourished from the late 1800s into the early 1900s when it was believed that American Indians were becoming extinct. Ethnographers engaged in a hectic flurry of activity during this time period in an effort to document as much as possible of American Indian life before it vanished. Edward C.

Curtis travelled the country carrying along "Indian" clothes and posing Indians in them for his famous photographs of "real Indians" who were soon to vanish. He created an image. Helen Harris's study, "On the Failure of Indian Education," linked the vanishing race stereotype to James Fenimore Cooper's version of Indians as a people who would inevitably become extinct. Harris cites Emerson, Longfellow, and Thoreau as contributing to this view.

The living fossils stereotype perpetuates the idea that any surviving American Indians are mere remnants of a once proud people. This view keeps American Indians frozen in the past (that is, the pre-1890 images by artists such as George Catlin) as the dominant visual image of American Indians.¹⁴ The fact that the Museum of Natural History in New York City focuses on dinosaurs and Indians certainly assaults the senses of contemporary American Indian people. The implicit message is that just as dinosaurs are extinct so are American Indians. This image is the standard American visual image of "Indians" in commercials, movies, toys, and books. The end result of the living fossils stereotype denies the diversity and dynamic nature of Native American cultures. Textbooks reinforce this stereotype, which leaves children without enough information to process the reality that American Indians are alive and well today, living contemporary lives, and maintaining their complex cultural heritage.

If we were to ask most teenagers and many adults what an Indian is, we could predict the answers. He was an early inhabitant of America who rode horseback, hunted buffalo, wore a feathered headdress and beaded buckskin and lived in a teepee. This is the picture of the Indian which Buffalo Bill and his original Wild West Show made famous . . . and which has been kept alive by television, museum displays.¹⁵

The generic stoic Indian is portrayed as a silent, humorless, granite-faced cigar store Indian. This is the Indian who says "How" and "Ugh." A generation of Americans grew up watching the Lone Ranger and Tonto, which solidified this stereotype in their minds. A League of Women Voters study of kindergarten and fifth grade students found seventy-six percent of kindergarten students had already learned the generic image of the Indian in feathers and teepees.¹⁶

The generic stereotype was already evident by the 1850s. *The American Child's Pictorial History of the United States* (1860), which was adopted as a textbook, depicted "the Indians of New England, Virginia, and Roanoke Island as living in tipis and wearing flowing-feather bonnets of Plains Indian type."¹⁷

“I is for Indian” is a standard identification in alphabet books and classrooms. The “Indian” portrayed is often a caricature or an animal dressed up like an Indian. This use of “I for Indian” dehumanizes American Indian peoples by placing them into a category of objects. These inventions or creations of an image of American Indians and the perpetuation of these images continue to this day. These stereotypes lump all Native Americans into one mold, thus denying the immense diversity of American Indian Peoples.

Media

During the 1800s, dime novels, literature, art, and Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show combined to create the image of American Indians as savages. This image has continued “from the era of Columbus up to the present without substantial modification or variation.”¹⁸ Saturday morning cartoons include many war-whooping, tomahawk-wielding, painted Indians on the warpath. Cartoons and picture books with “I” for Indian are young children’s earliest exposure to stereotypes about American Indians.

The stereotypical image continues to pervade the movie industry. *Dances With Wolves*, the recent blockbuster movie on American Indians is, of course, situated in the late 1800s, and although the Lakota people are presented as human beings, they are doomed to extinction. The basic theme of American Indians as people of the past continues. Although the current trend in the movies tends to portray American Indians as real human beings and their societies as making sense, that image is always mitigated by the appearance of another tribe of Indians who uphold the savage stereotype. Thus, “a few” Indians are good and the rest are bad. This so-called advancement is, in fact, a repeat of the Pocohantas theme that some Indians are good and can be converted to civilization, but the other Indians, the savages, are incapable of civilization.

How pervasive are these stereotypes and where do most people receive their information about American Indians? A 1991 study by Rouse and Hanson, *American Indian Stereotyping, Resource Competition, and Status-based Prejudice*, provides an examination of stereotypes and prejudice in college students at university settings in Texas, North Dakota, and Wisconsin. The study states that ignorance-based prejudice can be “modified by new information presented by a legitimate source (e.g., teachers).”

Stereotypic cultural beliefs about all Indians living in tipis, being warlike, migratory hunters, carrying tomahawks, carv-

ing totem poles, and speaking "Indian" are modified when students are presented with more accurate information about Indian history and ethnography. Likewise, students will accept an instructor's or text's authority.¹⁹

The authors cite mass media and advertising as the major sources that perpetuate stereotypes about American Indians.

They were looking at status-based prejudice that exists where communities are competing for resources such as hunting, fishing, or water rights. Receiving new information does not change this type of prejudice as people will discount the new information as being biased towards Indian peoples. Questionnaires were given to students taking introductory courses in sociology and anthropology. The questionnaire assessed three areas: 1) concepts held about American Indians; 2) students sources of information about American Indians; and 3) an opinion and knowledge survey to measure factual knowledge, general orientation, and victim-blaming.

They tended to share some traditional cultural stereotypes that reflect a pervasive generic "folk ethnography" promulgated by the media and recreation and leisure industry. Correspondingly, for all three samples, *the highest ranked source of information about American Indians was TV/movies.*²⁰ (emphasis added)

The study found that negative stereotyping varied according to the presence of Native Americans in the area and the level of competition over resources.

The Rouse and Hanson study indicates a uniformity in the ignorance about American Indians, because young people are greatly influenced by the media, and that making curriculum change in areas closer to Indian reservations will be more difficult than in areas where there are fewer American Indians. The state of Wisconsin passed a law in 1989, which was implemented in September 1992, requiring that units about Wisconsin Indians be taught at least two times in elementary grades and once in the high school. This law was enacted to deal with the public ignorance of treaty rights apparent in the conflict over fishing rights in northern Wisconsin.

Hirschfelder declares "Non-Indian writers have created an image of American Indians that is almost sheer fantasy." The media perpetuate these images and keep them firmly in the public domain through movies, television shows, commercials, and cartoons.

Textbooks

Were these stereotypical images of Indians wandering in the wild forest limited to academia? No, they were, and continue to be, perpetuated in the textbooks of American school children.

What American authors preached in their novels, plays, and poems about the inevitability of civilization superseding savagery, regardless of nobility, American school children learned in their textbooks.²¹

Ruth Elson conducted a study of more than a thousand textbooks used in American schools during the nineteenth century. Her study, *Guardians of Tradition, American Schoolbooks of the Nineteenth Century*, reveals the early textbook depiction of American Indians. Common themes included the romantic dignified noble savage and the cruel warlike savage. The theme of the American Indian as a nomad or wanderer in the wild is presented in an 1895 Reader which

describes the American forest at the time of the American Revolution: "where wild beasts and scarcely less savage Indians roamed in their freedom."

Along with the descriptions of these barbaric people were

profuse illustrations of their cruelty in highly dramatic tales of Indian warfare . . . many books present pictures showing an Indian about to tomahawk a woman with a child in her arms."

In fact, Elson states that "every Reader includes at least one detailed account of gory Indian warfare."²²

The justifications and/or rationalizations for the conquest of the Indians outlined in these textbooks included: 1) God's natural law, manifest destiny, the march of civilization; 2) the inherent inferiority of Indians and superiority of Europeans; 3) early cruelty to Indians as part of British colonialism; 4) Spanish treatment of Indians as more cruel than the English; 5) the implication that Indians were incapable of civilization; and 6) the inevitable extinction of Indians.

An example of the inevitable march of civilization can be seen in the way the removal of the Cherokees has been handled in textbooks. The Cherokees' battle to resist removal from their lands

was portrayed as refusing civilization, as refusing progress, even though the Cherokees had become quite wealthy farmers. That certainly was a one-sided presentation of a significant historical event. The impact of such textbooks on school children in the nineteenth century, indeed up to contemporary times, results in students never questioning colonial actions taken against American Indian Nations. The analysis of nineteenth-century textbooks illustrates the origins and consistency of the major themes in textbooks in the twentieth century. Textbooks appear to be, even given great spans of time, virtually unchangeable.

The review of stereotypes in textbooks in this chapter provides documentation showing that stereotypes have not changed substantially in textbooks. The worst words, such as *savage* and *terror*, may have been omitted recently, but the basic image of savages, as Indians destined to be overrun by civilization, and of Indians as belonging to the past, continues in textbooks.

Henry and Costo document another instance of American Indian objections to stereotypes in educational materials. On August 19, 1965, a group of American Indian scholars and historians, calling themselves the American Indian Historical Society, addressed the California State Curriculum Commission to make a statement on California textbooks.

We have studied many textbooks now in use, as well as those being submitted today. Our examination disclosed that not one book is free from error as to the role of the Indian in state and national history. We believe everyone has the right to his opinion. A person also has the right to be wrong. But a textbook has no right to be wrong, or to lie, hide the truth, or falsify history, or insult and malign a whole race of people. That is what these textbooks do. At best, these books are extremely superficial in their treatment of the American Indian, over-simplifying and generalizing the explanation of our culture and history, to the extent where the physical outlines of the Indians as a human being are lost. Misinformation, misinterpretation, and misconception—all are found in most of the textbooks. A true picture of the American Indian is entirely lacking.

Henry documents testimony on January 4, 1969, before the Senate Committee on Indian Education:

There is not one Indian in this country who does not cringe in anguish and frustration because of these textbooks. There is

not one Indian child who has not come home in shame and tears after one of those sessions in which he is taught that his people were dirty, animal-like, something less than human beings. We Indians are not just one more complaining minority. We are the proud and only true Natives of this land.²³

In 1970, Henry and Costo's *Textbooks and the American Indian* documented the work of thirty-two American Indian scholars evaluating more than 300 books used in American schools. The results of this study are succinctly stated: "Not one could be approved as a dependable source of knowledge about the history and culture of the Indian people in America."

In 1977, the Council on Interracial Books for Children, funded by the Carnegie Corporation, conducted a study of thirteen U.S. history textbooks published between 1970–75. This study examined the texts for racism, sexism, stereotypes, distortions, and omissions. Native Americans were included in this study of African Americans, Asian Americans, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, and women. For each group, the text provides an explanation of terminology used and a brief historical background.

The section on Native Americans includes twenty-six content areas that were examined and provides quotes from specific texts, a commentary on each quote, and references. The section also provides a "Native American Textbook Checklist" designed for teachers to use in evaluating texts. In the section on "The 'Indian Image'" the authors provide a concise statement on U.S. history textbooks:

Native Americans . . . have always been visible in history textbooks—or at least an objectified image of "Indians" has been visible. They were there, first to be "discovered" by Columbus, then to "lurk" in the "wilderness," "attack" wagon trains, "scalp" pioneers, and finally—with the buffalo—to "vanish from the scene." Granted, textbooks provided a few "friendly Indians" to offer food or guide services at critical moments, but these were the contrast to the "savages" who hindered, but never halted, the inexorable tide of Euro American "progress."²⁴

In 1978, Jesus Garcia conducted a longitudinal study of eighth-grade U.S. history texts in California (1956–76), analyzing stereotypes of American Indians in textbooks. The study examined 1,900 textbook statements and found that stereotypes had not changed significantly between 1956–76.

In a 1984 study of “Native Americans in Elementary School Social Studies Textbooks” which examined thirty-four textbooks used in grades K–7 in Virginia, Ferguson and Fleming state:

One important element of schooling that is involved in the shaping of attitudes of children is the textbook. Teachers without specialized training in a subject content area rely heavily on textbooks as a source of information. If the textbooks are inaccurate or biased, this misinformation or bias will likely be transmitted to students.²⁵

They used a three-part evaluation based on ten key concepts, evaluative terms, and a picture analysis. Their conclusions on the ten key concepts revealed that although content differed, key concepts such as differing perspectives on land ownership were ignored. They also found that little attention was paid to contemporary American Indians and current-day issues. Use of less biased language, by eliminating such words as “savage,” “fierce,” and “terror,” was cited as an improvement; however, they reached the conclusion that textbooks need much more improvement.

Another study, *The Indian Versus the Textbooks: Is There Any Way Out?* by Frederick Hoxie of the Newberry Library (1984), examined thirteen U.S. history textbooks at the college level. “I discovered that despite the changes and improvements of the past fifteen years, many of the distortions and inaccuracies referred to by Vogel . . . persist.”²⁶

My sample indicates that textbook authors simply ignore new information. This is particularly true when that information threatens cherished preconceptions about the American past. It is easier to add a brief biography of Geronimo to a chapter on the West than to surrender our self-image as tapers of the wilderness or settlers in a virgin land. . . . The appeal of the “lonely settler in the howling wilderness” motif is made plain by a quick check of textbook descriptions of Plymouth Colony. Only three of the thirteen texts identify Squanto as the individual who stepped forward to save the colony from starvation in the spring of 1621. And of those three, only one tells us that Squanto had previously been captured and taken to England. . . . With that information—and the knowledge that Squanto returned from England in 1619 to find his village wiped out by an epidemic—we get a much fuller picture of the man and his motives.²⁶

Hoxie provides four recommendations that would enable writers to present American Indian peoples as “coherent, multi-faceted actors in American history.” The first point acknowledges that Native American cultures are “nonwestern,” and are based on communal cultural values. He states that writers must understand that American Indian cultures are “rooted in the obligations of kinship,” with traditional values and ceremonies that structure their way of life. The second point recommends presenting encounters between American Indians and Europeans as “cumulative interaction.” Third, he recommends:

[O]rganizers of textbook projects need to purge their books of inaccurate and misleading shorthand references that suggest Indians lack coherent motives for their actions. Indians did not “wander” or “roam.” Tribes did not live in isolation. Many Indians experienced military defeat, and all Indians witnessed changes in their cultural life; these facts do not mean that Indian cultures were necessarily destroyed or corrupted through contact with Europeans.

And, fourth, he recommends utilizing research from cultural anthropology that would help “*to understand and explain the coherency in all cultures.*” (emphasis added)

Hoxie identifies a major problem in textbooks as their treatment of what he calls Presence and Absence. He defines the pattern or typical organization of textbooks with regard to American Indians:

Indians appear at the time of discovery, in skirmishes accompanying early settlement, in the revolutionary war (as British allies), in descriptions of the Old Northwest and the War of 1812, during removal, at the Little Big Horn and Wounded Knee, as beneficiaries of the Indian New Deal, and as militants at Wounded Knee II and Alcatraz.

Actually, several of these events are usually lacking in most textbook coverage. The twentieth century is generally not included. “For the most part Indians simply cease to exist in texts following the battle at Wounded Knee.” Hoxie refers to the absence or lack of information on contemporary American Indians as “historical selectivity.”²⁷

In his section on Indian Legacy, Hoxie discusses at length the plurality of American culture. “Texts have difficulty admitting that American history is not the story of one group. U.S. history is the

story of many groups who met and affected one another in the North American environment.” He states that “defining a workable and honest view of the Indians’ role in the development of American society and culture is the key to integrating Indian materials into courses and texts on the history of the United States.”²⁸

G. Patrick O’Neill (1987) reviewed ten studies of stereotyping of American Indians in history and social studies textbooks published between 1976–84 and concluded that textbooks had not substantially improved in the last twenty years.

In his 1989 study of fifteen high school literature texts adopted in South Carolina, James Charles evaluated these texts to find out if they reinforced stereotypes about American Indians. The four categories of stereotypes found in this study were: Noble Savages, Savage-Savages, Generic Indians, and Living Fossils. His initial analysis showed American Indians as well represented in the texts examined. However, Charles conducted what he calls a “deeper analysis” and found a “lack of proportional representation” of the following: 1) the contemporary genres (written) of poetry, drama, and essay; 2) traditional (oral) genres of song-poems and oral narratives; 3) regional affiliations of authors; and 4) form and content aspects of literature at particular grade levels. An interesting point in his analysis is that song-poems are often brief, because, citing a Papago explanation, “the song is so short because we know so much.” This should “remind us that in oral poetry, more than ever, we need to know the cultural background, the complex allusions, and the numerous associations evoked in the native audience or participant.” He recommends including more oral narratives and oratory, including contemporary examples.²⁹

A Study on the Iroquois in Textbooks (1975)

Only one article deals specifically with the Iroquois, *The Treatment of Iroquois Indians in Selected American History Textbooks*, by Arlene Hirschfelder. In this study Hirschfelder examined twenty-seven history textbooks published in the 1950s and 1960s, and found that three entirely omitted the Iroquois, and three mentioned them only once. Only one writer mentioned the six distinct nations of the Iroquois, but the information was in a picture caption, not in the main body of the text. Including information on diverse peoples in America within a picture caption or box presents them as peripheral to American history. Inclusion in the main body of the text presents them as a significant part of history.

Hirschfelder examined various themes in her article showing how these themes were omitted or distorted in the texts. Under the theme identified as behavior, the Iroquois were presented as “warlike,” instilling “terror,” as “barbarous nations” with “ferocious vitality,” who were “constantly on the warpath.” Hirschfelder supports the claim that the Iroquois tortured those people who were not adopted into the Iroquois nations, but she also shows this one-sided statement as

deceptive because torturing one’s enemies was an accepted code of behavior among Indians and non-Indians. A misimpression that Iroquois were particularly brutal to enemies has been created by the omission of pertinent data regarding the similar behavior of non-Indians.³⁰

Certainly, presenting information on “warlike” behavior would require a worldwide study that would show that in any culture, in any war, in any time period, “warlike” behavior contains wartime atrocities.

Hirschfelder notes that in addition to being warriors, Iroquois men were also hunters, craftsmen, physicians, politicians, dancers, and religious leaders. This writer would add to the list the men’s vital roles as orators, singers, storytellers, fathers, uncles, and grandfathers in Iroquois families.

The women’s roles are often neglected in textbooks, and only one picture caption mentioned women storing and preparing food. Hirschfelder provides information on the role of Iroquois women:

Iroquois women were the farmers in their culture as well as clothesmakers, dispersers of herbal remedies, cooks, and dancers in ceremonials. They also had an important political role because of their power to name and remove Confederacy Chiefs.

She quotes Hazel Hertzberg’s comparison of Iroquois women and European women of the same time period:

There is no question but that at the time of European contact, the Iroquois woman occupied a higher, freer, and more influential place in her society than did the European woman in hers . . . the Iroquois woman’s position was securely based on her leadership in the family and in agriculture.³¹

Hirschfelder discusses settlement patterns that focus on the longhouse structure. She mentions that students are not taught

the cultural basis for living in the longhouse and are left with idea that the Iroquois continue to live in longhouses.

The differing views of land ownership and land usage between Iroquois and Europeans were not discussed except to say Indians were ignorant of European land values, and private property, thus once again failing to present Iroquois cultural values of communal land usage.

Only three authors provide some explanation of the origins of the Iroquois Confederacy. The debate over exactly when the league was founded is mentioned in only one text. Some have tried to pinpoint a date and their guesses have been quoted over and over as fact, but in truth, the Confederacy originated long before Europeans arrived and a date cannot be established. Hirschfelder states: "Moreover, no authority has determined the precise time the Confederacy was formed."

Only one writer refers to the influence of the Iroquois Confederacy on the founding fathers. Twelve of the textbooks mention the Iroquois attended the Albany Conference of 1754, but none of these discusses the vital role of the Iroquois in that crucial meeting. The purpose of this conference was to improve relations with the Iroquois, thereby strengthening colonial position. Benjamin Franklin was influenced by the Iroquois Confederacy as a form of government. Hirschfelder found that not one textbook refers to this cultural interaction. She quotes the now famous statement of Benjamin Franklin regarding the Albany Plan of Union:

It would be a very strange thing, if six nations of ignorant Savages should be capable of forming a Scheme for such a Union, and be able to execute it in such a Manner, as that it has subsisted ages, and appears indissoluble; and yet that a like Union should be impractical for ten or a Dozen English colonies, to whom it is more necessary, and must be more advantageous; and who cannot be supposed to want an equal understanding of their ignorance.³²

Franklin's statement is clear in presenting his case and his knowledge of the Iroquois Confederacy as he admonishes the colonies to unite.

Hirschfelder found only two textbooks contained references to current-day Iroquois people and these references did not provide a map of current-day reservations.

It is not surprising that many Americans, both young and old, are not aware that Iroquois reservations exist in upstate and

western New York because a basic source of information, American history textbooks, has omitted this information.³³

Hirschfelder concludes that textbook “information is inaccurate, ethnocentric, misleading, insufficient, or altogether missing from the narrative.”³⁴

The 1990s: The Stereotypes Continue

In the 1990s one would expect that there have been great improvements in textbooks and that the average American has by now received a better education about American Indians. Have all these stereotypes, omissions, misinformation, and inaccuracies been corrected? One would hope so. However, in a seminar taught in the fall of 1991 at Cornell University using Jack Weatherford’s *Indian Givers*, students made the following statements in their final papers:

My previous knowledge of Indians, received through my elementary and high school education, was sketchy and often biased. . . . The only time students were given the opportunity to grasp that Indians had actually accomplished something in the Americas was when we were given the chance to try (with paper bags and popsicle sticks) to recreate their art and housing.

As is often the case with United States society, it is our tendency to assume that Americans and Europeans were the source of the American culture. Having grown up in a white, middle class society, I too must admit to some ignorance of this sort . . . I feel that the more important point of this book is that we, as American citizens, have never been told this information before. We are told of scalping, teepees, war dances, face paint, “ugh” and “how,” but rarely do we learn that so much of modern American culture owes its origination to the Native Americans. We only hear that the Indians got in the way of our development and settlement of the American continents, rarely are we told of how much they contributed and helped us in the construction of our culture.

In elementary school, I remember that we would only discuss the Indians around Thanksgiving and even then, it was arts and crafts. We would make headdresses out of construction paper. We didn’t really understand Indian culture, we just were taught that they know how to grow corn and other crops.

This country's "educational" system has misled us to believe that before Christopher Columbus brought "civilization" to America that this was a land of barbaric savages. . . . As I read this I became angry with myself having discovered just how vulnerable I had been to our educational system which had successfully manipulated me into believing that the English Settlers who left a monarchical society had a concept of what democracy actually was without the aid of any other peoples. To have recently learned that the Indians had achieved the highest cultural development of liberty, freedom and individuality, while having had been lied to all these years about their savage-like nature reveals the first true civilized nation. After having been enlightened, I am afraid that I can never fully accept what an instructor deems to be truth without my own ample research.

My image of the American Indian used to be two dimensional, and I am ashamed that to me Indians were no more real than their cardboard pictures at Thanksgiving time.

These statements show the pervasiveness of stereotypes in textbooks. These young college students, products of the American education system, are protesting the same stereotypes the elders identified in 1927. From my own experience teaching on the college level and discussions with my colleagues across this country, we continue to hear the same statements as those above made by our students.

No matter what grade level—kindergarten to college level—whether in history, literature, or social studies, the stereotypes, omissions, and distortions about American Indians continue to pervade educational materials. What is the basis, the underlying assumption behind these images of the noble savage, savage savage, or the vanishing race? Why have American textbooks presented such a distorted image of American Indians? Why do these images consistently deny the cultural complexity, the diversity, of American Indian peoples? Why do the texts provide perspectives not based in reality, but instead provide "invented" views and images of American Indians? The next chapter delves into the reasoning behind the development and persistence of these stereotypes.